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### XIII.—SWIFT AND THE STAMP ACT OF 1712

In a debate, December 22, 1819, in the House of Commons on the Newspaper Stamp Duties Bill, Sir James Mackintosh, speaking of the passage of the original act of 1712, said: "Swift—being then a distinguished Tory, suggested the first idea of a stamp duty for the avowed purpose of preventing publications against the government,—Swift, that parricide who endeavored to destroy that very press to which he owed so much, to which he owed all his fame, and at that very moment all his preferment." <sup>1</sup>

The charge thus brought against Swift has been reiterated by writers on the history of journalism such as Andrews,<sup>2</sup> Grant,<sup>3</sup> and Bourne;<sup>4</sup> by Cooke in his *Memoirs of Lord Bolingbroke*,<sup>5</sup> and implicitly, if not openly, by others.<sup>6</sup> Swift's unamiable personality, his satiric point of view, his avowed partisanship in so much of his writing, and that "inverted hypocrisy" which caused him to present his own actions in their worse rather than their better light, have led many to accept the accusations against him without careful scrutiny of the grounds on which they are based.

The fact that the Stamp Act is generally believed to

<sup>1</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, vol. xli, p. 1479.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Andrews, *The History of British Journalism*, London, 1859.

<sup>3</sup> James Grant, *The Newspaper Press*, Tinsley Bros., London, 1871.

<sup>4</sup> H. R. Fox Bourne, *English Newspapers*, London, 1887.

<sup>5</sup> George Wingrove Cooke, *Memoirs of Lord Bolingbroke*, Richard Bentley, London, 1835.

<sup>6</sup> John Ashton, *Social Life in the Reign of Queen Anne*, London, 1882.

have been the cause of the suspension of *The Spectator*<sup>7</sup> and other contemporary publications makes it of unusual importance to students of literary history. Moreover, it continued in operation until 1855, and the tax was increased by various enactments until it reached a maximum of four pence on all newspapers, and of three shillings and sixpence on all advertisements.<sup>8</sup> For nearly a century and a half it was the most important restriction on the liberty of the press. The far-reaching effect of this measure lends added interest to the question as to what was Swift's share of the responsibility for its enactment.

There are a number of charges brought against Swift in connection with it. First, that Swift "suggested the first idea of a stamp duty."<sup>9</sup> Second, that the government kept secret its intention to pass the measure and that "it was smuggled at last into 10th Anne, Cap. 19, and fairly hidden among the duties on soap, paper, silk, linens, hackney chairs, cards, marriage licenses, etc."<sup>10</sup> Third, that as the Stamp Act was not enacted until June 10, 1712, and as Swift referred to such a proposal in *The Journal to Stella* under date of January 31, 1710-11, he "seems to have been among the first to have had private information as to the intended measure."<sup>11</sup> Fourth, that Swift "seems not only to have approved, but to have urged this severity."<sup>12</sup> Fifth, that he showed "an ill-natured exultation" instead of regret over the imposition of the tax.<sup>13</sup>

It is a noteworthy fact that the only evidence advanced

<sup>7</sup> L. Lewis, *The Advertisements of the Spectator*, Boston, 1909.

<sup>8</sup> Grant, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 299.

<sup>9</sup> Andrews, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

<sup>10</sup> Ashton, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 77; Andrews, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

<sup>11</sup> Grant, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 100; Cooke, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 221.

<sup>12</sup> Cooke, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 222.

<sup>13</sup> Grant, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 100; Ashton, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

by his critics is taken from Swift's own writings. The four following entries from *The Journal to Stella* are often quoted: Under date of January 31, 1710-1711 Swift writes: "They are here intending to tax all little printed penny papers a half-penny every sheet, which will utterly ruin Grub Street, and I am endeavoring to prevent it." October 10, 1711: "A rogue that writes a newspaper called The Protestant Post Boy has reflected on me in one of his papers, but the Secretary has taken him up, and he shall have a squeeze extraordinary,—I'll tantivy him with a vengeance." July 19, 1712: "Grub Street has but ten days to live; then an Act of Parliament takes place that ruins it, by taxing every half-sheet a half-penny." August 7, 1712: "Do you know that Grub Street is dead and gone last week? No more ghosts or murders now for love or money."

In answer to the charge that Swift approved this measure and urged its adoption we have his own words that he endeavored to prevent it. His critics very cavalierly dismiss this statement. Bourne says, "Swift's endeavors appear to have been in the opposite direction."<sup>14</sup> Andrews writes as follows: "We should not be surprised if Swift also suggested to the government the imposition of a tax upon the press. He was so insincere that we do not believe him when he asserts the contrary.—There is something strangely confirmatory of our suspicions in the tone in which Swift predicts and gloats over the havoc which the act made among the smaller fry."<sup>15</sup> Austin Dobson is the only author I have read who credits Swift with sincerity in this statement.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Bourne, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

<sup>15</sup> Andrews, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

<sup>16</sup> Austin Dobson, *Richard Steele, A Biography*, English Worthies series, Longmans, London, 1886: "The baleful Stamp Act, which

As long as Swift's critics question his honesty, we shall have to seek other evidence to settle the issue. Before leaving this phase of the subject, however, it may be well to quote from Swift's *History of the Four Last Years of the Queen*, which he prepared for publication in 1737. In speaking of the Act, he says: "But as the person [Mr. Secretary St. John, now Lord Viscount Bolingbroke (original note)] who advised the Queen in that part of her message, had only then in his thoughts the redressing of the political and factious libels, I think he ought to have taken care, by his great credit in the House, to have proposed some ways by which that evil might be removed; the law for taxing papers having produced a quite contrary effect, as was then foreseen by many persons and hath since been found true by experience."<sup>17</sup>

There is what may be called negative evidence that Swift's contemporaries did not hold him responsible for the Act. A careful search of his own correspondence<sup>18</sup>

Swift had foreseen a year earlier, and had vainly endeavored to avert" (p. 143).

<sup>17</sup> *Works*, edited by Temple Scott, George Bell & Sons, London, 1902, vol. x, pp. 124-125. In the sentences immediately preceding Swift says, "Among the matters of importance during this session, we may justly number the proceedings of the House of Commons with relation to the press, since Her Majesty's message to the House, of January the seventeenth, concludes with a paragraph, representing the great licences taken in publishing false and scandalous libels, such as are a reproach to any government; and recommending to them to find a remedy equal to the mischief. The meaning of these words in the message, seems to be confined to these weekly and daily papers and pamphlets, reflecting upon the persons and the management of the ministry. But the House of Commons, in their address, which answers this message, makes an addition of the blasphemies against God and religion; and it is certain, that nothing would be more for the honour of the legislature, than some effectual law for putting a stop to this universal mischief."

For historical reasons given below, I am compelled to believe that the interpretation put by the House on the Queen's words is far more reasonable and accurate than that of Swift.

<sup>18</sup> F. E. Ball, ed., *The Correspondence of Swift*, London, 1910-1914.

as well as that of Steele,<sup>19</sup> Pope,<sup>20</sup> and Bolingbroke,<sup>21</sup> does not reveal a single reference to it. Further, if Swift had been so accused, he would not have remained silent. Controversial writing would have been augmented by a lively piece of invective, we may be sure, had there been any occasion for it. Moreover, I examined the papers of the period available in the Burney collection of the British Museum for any possible expression of such feeling by the editors. As the papers were prohibited from printing even the votes in parliament, one cannot expect to find them discussing even a measure of such immediate importance to them as the Stamp Act. The only article was in *The Protestant Post Boy* for May 10, 1712. This ardent opponent of Swift would not have spared him had there been any general belief that he was responsible for the Act. Instead we find the following: "For the poor broken Stationer that was resolved to be revenged on the whole Trade by this Project, because he could not live by it, even without such Taxes, may assure himself that he is out of his calculation. . . ."

Evidence of an impersonal and objective kind in regard to the first three charges, that Swift was the first to suggest such a tax, that the act was passed surreptitiously, and that Swift was one of the first to know of it, if he did not actually suggest it, may be found in the history of the efforts to restrict the press during the reign of Anne and in the events immediately connected with the passage of the Stamp Act itself.

On April 18, 1695 the House of Commons refused to

<sup>19</sup> J. Nichols, ed., *Epistolary Correspondence of Sir Richard Steele*, 2 vols., London, 1809.

<sup>20</sup> Whitwell Elwin, *The Correspondence of Pope*.

<sup>21</sup> Gilbert Parke, *Letters and Correspondence of Viscount Bolingbroke*, 4 vols., London, 1798.

agree to a further continuance of the Licensing Act. They said it was "a Law which in no Wise answered the End for which it was made. . . . But there is no Penalty appointed for Offenders therein, they being left to be punished at Common Law (as they may be) without that act, whereas there are great and grievous Penalties imposed by that Act, for Matters wherein neither Church nor State is in any ways concerned." <sup>22</sup>

In January, 1698-1699 the House of Lords passed a "Printing Regulation" bill which contained provisions for requiring authors and printers to register their names.<sup>23</sup> The House of Commons refused to concur.<sup>24</sup> January 22, 1701-1702 the same bill was again introduced in the Lords but was voted down on the third reading.<sup>25</sup> These actions are of interest for two reasons. This proposal to require authors and printers to register their names keeps recurring throughout the period, and, as I shall show later, it was only when this was found impracticable, that the Stamp duty was passed as an alternative measure.

In the second place, it is of immediate interest, because on January 21, 1701-1702 the Commons, "Ordered, That a Committee be appointed to consider of Methods for preventing Libels and Scandalous Papers; and report the same to the House." Fifty-seven members were named, including Mr. Harcourt, Mr. Harley, Mr. Walpole, "and they are to meet this afternoon at Five a Clock in the Speaker's Chambers." <sup>26</sup>

There is no entry of any report of this committee. But

<sup>22</sup> *Lords Journals*, vol. xv, p. 545.

<sup>23</sup> *Lords Journals*, vol. xvi, p. 368.

<sup>24</sup> *Commons Journals*, vol. xii, p. 468.

<sup>25</sup> *Lords Journals*, vol. xvii, p. 22.

<sup>26</sup> *Commons Journals*, vol. xiii, p. 699.

Andrews in *The History of British Journalism* says: "It was now for the first time that it struck the legislature that what it could not suppress, it could, at all events *tax*, and by putting a stamp of one penny on every newspaper containing a whole sheet, and of one half-penny on every half-sheet raise a not inconsiderable revenue. A project to this effect was brought forward but abandoned."<sup>27</sup> He gives no authority for this statement except to say that it elicited a pamphlet entitled: "Reasons humbly Offered to the Parliament, in behalf of several Persons concerned in Paper Making, Printing and Publishing the Half penny News Papers against the Bill now Depending for laying a Penny Stamp upon every half Sheet of All Newspapers."<sup>28</sup> This pamphlet is undated and there is nothing to warrant its being placed definitely in 1701-1702. It is certain, however, that it could not refer to the legislation of 1712, as no such bill was framed, and one phrase places it fairly early in the period: "That the Paper Trade hath of late Years (since the Revolution). . . ."

There are in the British Museum five pamphlets of from fifteen to sixty-seven pages in length, dated from 1698 to 1704,<sup>29</sup> discussing the necessity of restraining the press for the protection of the Established Church. In

<sup>27</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 94.

<sup>28</sup> Press Mark, 816. m. 12 (38).

<sup>29</sup> A Letter to a Member of Parliament, Showing, that a Restraint on the press is Inconsistent with the Protestant Religion, and dangerous to the Liberties of the nation, 1698 (32 pp.).

A Modest Plea for the Due Regulation of the Press, In Answer to several Reasons lately Printed against it. By Francis Gregory, D.D., 1698, (46 pp.). A Letter to a Member of Parliament, Showing the Necessity of Regulating the Press: Chiefly from the Necessity of Publick Establishments in Religion From the Rights and Immunities of a National Church, and the Trust reposed in the Christian Magistrate to Protect and Defend Them. 1699, (67 pp.).

Reasons against Restraining the Press, 1704, (15 pp.).



1702 Queen Anne issued a proclamation against the increase of "heretical, blasphemous, irreligious, treasonable, and seditious books, pamphlets, papers" since the expiration of the Licensing Act.

We have in this royal proclamation and these pamphlets the first expression of the desire to protect the Established Church from attacks by dissenters, free-thinkers, and atheists, which became such a strong motive for urging restrictions upon the press.

In the Duke of Portland's Manuscripts there is a letter from Abigail Harley to Edward Harley dated March 7, 1709-1710, which contains the following passage:

"Yesterday was taken up by the Doctor's (Sacheverell) counsel in reading passages out of several books full of the horridest blasphemy that ever was vented among those called Christians, others full of base reflections upon the Queen and her family, one passage that she had no more title to the Crown than my Lord Mayor's horse, Defoe's wet and dry Martyrdom was not forgot: none of common understanding but must think the Church and State too in danger from such christened heathens if suffered to go on without notice taken of them. The Queen heard all this yesterday."<sup>80</sup>

It may have been the intense bitterness of the sectarian controversy caused by the trial of Dr. Sacheverell which prompted the Queen to summon a convocation of the clergy on December 12, 1710. In her letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury she said:

"It is with great Grief of Heart, we observe the scandalous attempts which of late years have been made to infect the minds of our good Subjects, by loose and Prophan Principles, openly scattered and propagated among them.

<sup>80</sup> Historical MSS. Commission, Report 15, App. iv, *Mss. of the Duke of Portland at Welbeck Abbey*, vol. iv, p. 534.

“ We think the Consultation of the Clergy particularly requisite to repress these daring Attempts, and to prevent the like for the future.” <sup>31</sup>

On January 31, 1710-1711, Queen Anne sent a second letter to Convocation conveying matters for its consideration. The first was, “ The Drawing up a Representation of the present State of Religion among us, with regard to the late excessive Growth of Infidelity, Heresy, and Profaneness.” <sup>32</sup>

Each house of Convocation appointed a committee for this purpose. The two houses were unable to agree on the form of the representation, and after about four months of controversy a deadlock resulted.<sup>33</sup> Each house, however, adopted its own representation, so that there were two documents in place of any official statement. In that of the lower house occur the following passages:

“ However, neither these, nor any other wicked Arts and Methods, how craftily soever pursued, would have met with so remarkable Success, had not other CAUSES and circumstances occurred to help forward the event, and favour the Growth of irreligious Opinions.

“ Among the chief of these, we reckon, the Removal of that Restraint, which the Wisdom of former Times had laid upon the Press; and which no sooner ceas’d than those pernicious Principles, that before had been whisper’d only in Corners, among the Dissolute and Lawless, were now proclaim’d in our Streets, and sent abroad to pollute the Minds of Your Majesty’s Subjects, in all Parts of your Dominions.”

<sup>31</sup> *The History of the Present Parliament and Convocation.* Printed for John Baker at the Black-Boy in Pater-Noster Row M D CCXI. Pp. 113-114.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* Also Abel Boyer, *Political State of Great Britain from 1711 to 1739*, London, 1739. Pp. 485-486.

The concluding paragraph:

"That, for which we at present, in most earnest, and most humble Manner, address ourselves to your Majesty, is, That by your Royal Interposition, An Act may be obtain'd for Restraining the present excessive and Scandalous Liberty of Printing Wicked Books at Home, or Importing the like from abroad, in such Manner, as to the Wisdom of Your Majesty and Your Parliament shall seem the most expedient. For as we take this to have been the chief Source and Cause of these Evils Whereof we now Complain: so we Question not, but the Removal of it would be the most speedy and effectual cure of them." <sup>34</sup>

The concluding paragraph of the representation of the upper house is the same in substance and almost identical in wording. <sup>35</sup>

These representations were printed in a pamphlet issued by John Morphey under date of 1711. <sup>36</sup> This evoked a number of other pamphlets under date of 1711 and 1712 in reply to the charges of Convocation. <sup>37</sup> In one of these occurs the following significant passage: "'Twill be difficult to get a Protestant British Parliament into your measures, of taking away the Liberty of the Press. 'Twas the Invention of Printing which dispel'd the Darkness of Popery, and brought Truth and the Gospel it self to light.'" <sup>38</sup>

During this time that the religious or ecclesiastical phase of the question was receiving so much attention, the economic and political aspects were not ignored. In the Treasury Papers, cxxix, there is an undated document,

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 262-272.

<sup>36</sup> Press mark, 4105, CC. 3.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 286.

<sup>37</sup> Press mark, 698. 1. 13.

<sup>38</sup> *Some Thoughts on the Representation of the Lower House of Convocation In a Letter to the Reverend Dr. Atterbury, Prolocutor*, London. Printed for J. Baker at the Black-Boy in Pater-Noster Row, 1711.

calendared as 1709 or 1710, entitled "A Proposal to increase the Revenue of the Stamp Office." It says, "There are published every Weekly [*sic*] about Forty-five thousand News Papers. . . . If a Duty was laid upon these Papers, 'tis very Probable that not above Thirty Thousand would be published Weekly. Yet allowing this Decrease: If the Thirty Thousand were mark'd with the Penny Stamp; The Stamp office would produce more then it now does 125 per week which is per Ann 6500." Later sections propose a similar duty on "Advertisements, Play House Bills, News Letters, Pamphlets, Almanacks," and also a tax of two pence per sheet on every book entered for copyright.

More significant, however, than this unsigned proposal is an entry in the diary of Narcissus Luttrell, which is the most complete and is apparently the most authentic source of information, except the journals of the houses of parliament, on state affairs for this period. On Saturday, January 20, 1710-1711 appears the following: "A motion was made for laying 1 d per pound on English hopps, a 2 d upon Flemish: and a stamp upon printed papers."<sup>39</sup> The Journal of the House for January 19, 1710-1711 states "The House (according to Order) resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole House to consider farther Ways and Means for raising the Supply granted to her Majesty."<sup>40</sup> There is, unfortunately, no source of information in regard to the action of the committees or debates in committees for this particular period.

If Luttrell can be relied on, we have here an explanation of Swift's statement of January 31, 1710-1711 "They

<sup>39</sup> Narcissus Luttrell, *A Brief Historical Relation of State Affairs from September 1678 to April 1714*. 6 vols., Oxford University Press, 1858, vol. VI, p. 680.

<sup>40</sup> *Commons Journals*, vol. XVI, p. 462.

are here intending to tax all little printed penny papers a half-penny every sheet, which will utterly ruin Grub Street, and I am endeavoring to prevent it." It is this which caused Swift's critics to say that he had secret information in advance of the intention of the government to pass the Stamp Act. There must at least have been something more than a secret intention, if a private gentleman like Narcissus Luttrell, who gathered his information from the gossip and the news-letters of his day, knew that such a measure had been proposed in parliament.

The same idea of taxing the papers is advanced in another pamphlet entitled "A Proposal for a Fund for the Use of the Government. Proposed by Mr. Thomas Hoskins, and Mr. George Osmond."<sup>41</sup> It bears the date 1711. The authors advocate, "That one shilling be paid on every Original Copy, of all Pamphlets, Newspapers and News Letters, and Six-pence a Sheet for the Original Copy of all Pamphlets and Books of all sorts, . . . and Six-pence for every advertisement."

The charge that there was unusual secrecy about the passage of the Stamp Act and that it was smuggled into other legislation can best be investigated by a survey of the legislative process leading to its enactment.

The first step was a message from Queen Anne to Parliament dated January 17, 1711-1712. The Queen was, undoubtedly, following the recommendations of the Convocation to which she had referred the general question over a year before. The concluding paragraph of her message is as follows: "Her Majesty finds it necessary to observe how great licence is taken in publishing false and scandalous Libels, such as are a reproach to any government. This Evil seems to be too strong for the Laws now

<sup>41</sup> Press mark 8223. c. 9. (76).

in force: it is therefore recommended to you to find a Remedy equal to the Mischief.”<sup>42</sup>

A committee appointed to draw up an address, reported on the following day. “We are very sensible how much the Liberty of the Press is abused, by turning it into such a Licentiousness as is a just Reproach to the Nation: since not only false and scandalous Libels are printed and published against your Majesty’s Government, but the most horrid Blasphemies against God and Religion; and we beg leave humbly to assure Your Majesty, that we will do our utmost to find out a Remedy equal to this Mischief, and that may effectually cure it.”<sup>43</sup>

On February 12th it was resolved that the matter should be considered in a committee of the whole house on February 19th.<sup>44</sup> Action was postponed from time to time until a flagrant violation of the privilege of the press occurred. On April 7th Samuel Buckley published in the *Daily Courant* a Memorial of the States General in answer to the Resolutions of the House reflecting on the conduct of the Dutch in the war. The article was declared to be a “false scandalous and mischievous libel . . . in breach of the privilege of the house,” and Samuel Buckley was taken into the custody of the Sergeant at Arms.<sup>45</sup> On April 12th, the House was resolved into a committee of the whole house to consider this licence of the press, and agreed on the following resolutions, “That all Printing Presses be registered with the Names of the Owners and Places of Abodes and that the Author, Printer, and Publisher of every Book, set his Name and Place of abode thereto.”<sup>46</sup>

<sup>42</sup> *Commons Journals*, vol. XVIII, p. 28.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>44</sup> Abel Boyer, *The History of the Reign of Queen Anne, Digested into Annals*, 1703-1712, vol. x, p. 147.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. XI, p. 9.

<sup>46</sup> *The History of the Proceedings of the Second Session of this*

When this committee of the whole house reported on April 22nd, this resolution was omitted, and instead a series of twelve resolutions embodying the provisions of the Stamp Act as finally passed were substituted.<sup>47</sup> How or why this change was made I have been unable to determine. Cobbett in his *Parliamentary History* says, "Some members having, in the grand committee on ways and means, suggested a more effectual way for suppressing libels, viz., the laying a great duty on all newspapers and pamphlets."<sup>48</sup> This statement is taken *verbatim* from a contemporary pamphlet, "The History of the Proceedings of the Second Session of this Present Parliament."<sup>49</sup> Another pamphlet historian gives the following amusing explanation: "So many Difficulties arose in this affair, that it was thought fit to leave it as they found it, only a good Tax was laid on all Paper, Pamphlets and Newspapers, to punish the Licence of the Proprietors."<sup>50</sup>

On a motion to incorporate in the general revenue bill the clauses necessary to carry out these resolutions, there was considerable debate and the House adjourned without action. On April 24th it was ordered that a bill or bills be brought in upon the resolution agreed to on the 22nd. On April 29th they were ordered to be made a part of the general revenue bill. On May 6th a further order was passed in regard to the consolidation of various revenue items into one bill. The bill was considered further on May 9th, 11th, 12th, and 15th, and various minor amend-

*Present Parliament.* London. Printed: and Sold by John Baker, pp. 82-84. Press Mark 8132 d. 65 (2); Cobbett, *op. cit.*, vol. vi, p. 1125.

<sup>47</sup> *Commons Journals*, vol. xviii, p. 196.

<sup>48</sup> *Op. cit.*, vol. vi, p. 1125.

<sup>49</sup> *Vide supra*, No. 46.

<sup>50</sup> *The History and Defense of the Last Parliament.* Printed for A. Baldwin at the Oxford-Arms in Warwick Lane. 1713. (Press Mark 809, p. 3).

ments were made. On May 16th it was finally passed, apparently unanimously, or at least without any division of the House, as there is no record of the vote. On May 22nd a message was received from the House of Lords that they had agreed to the bill without any amendment.<sup>51</sup>

I have given this detailed account of the passage of the "Stamp Act" to show that it was far from having been secretly and hurriedly passed, but rather received extended consideration, and further that in making this measure a part of the general revenue bill, the House acted in the regular manner. The Act, 10 Anne, Cap. 19 fills sixty-seven pages of fine print in the collected statutes. A comparison of this Act with others of the same period, notably 10 Anne, Cap. 26, shows that it is rather less heterogeneous in its items than many others.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>51</sup> *Commons Journals*, vol. xvii, pp. 196, 198, 200, 203, 212, 217, 218, 226, 227, 234.

<sup>52</sup> A comparison of the titles of these two acts will perhaps make this evident.

10th Anne Cap. xix (Stamp Act): "For laying several duties upon all soap and paper made in *Great Britain*, or imported into the same; and upon chequered and striped linens imported; and upon certain silks, callicoes, linens, and stuffs printed, painted, or stained; and upon several kinds of stamped vellum, parchment, and paper; and upon certain printed papers, pamphlets and advertisements, for raising the sum of 1,800,000 pounds, by way of lottery towards her Majesty's supply; and for licensing an additional number of hackney chairs; and for charging certain stocks of cards and dice; and for better securing her Majesty's duties to arise in the office of the stamp duties by licenses for marriages and otherwise; and for relief of persons who have not claimed their lottery tickets in due time, or have lost Exchequer bills, or lottery tickets; and for borrowing money upon stock, part of the capital of the *South Sea* company for the use of the publick."

10th Anne Cap. xxvi: "For laying additional duties on hides and skins, vellum and parchment, and new duties on starch, coffee, tea, drugs, gilt and silver wire, and policies of insurance, to secure a yearly fund for satisfaction of orders to the contributors of a further sum of 1,800,000 pounds toward her Majesty's supply; and for the



Further light is thrown on the charge of secrecy by the fact that a number of petitions, copies of which are preserved, were presented to the House while the measure was under consideration. These are "The Case of the Manufacturers of Paper, the Stationers, Printers . . ."; "The Case of the Company of Parish-Clerks, Relating to the Duties on Pamphlets"; "The Case of the Members of the Sun-Fire-Office, London"; "Reasons Humbly submitted to the Honourable House of Commons against laying a Duty on Newspapers and Pamphlets"; "The Case of the poor Paper-Makers and Printers farther stated."<sup>53</sup>

There is one further fact which seems to me especially significant in regard to the intention of those who passed the Stamp Act. It is quite obvious that it was expected to check the publication not of all papers and pamphlets but only of those which depended for their sale on their cheapness and sensationalism. On June 3rd, before the Stamp Act had received the royal sanction, the resolutions, mentioned above, which required the author, printer, and publisher of any pamphlet or paper to place his name and address thereon were reported to the House, and a bill was ordered to be drawn up embodying them.<sup>54</sup> As Swift says in his *History of the Four Last Years of the Queen*, the bill was brought into the House so late in the session that there was no time to pass it.<sup>55</sup>

better securing the duties on candles; and for obviating doubts concerning certain payments in *Scotland*; and for suppressing unlawful lotteries, and other devices of the same kind; and concerning cake soap: and for the relief of *Mary Ravenal*, in relation to an annuity of 18 pounds per annum; and concerning prize cocoanuts brought from America; and certain tickets which were intended to be subscribed into the stock of the *South Sea* company; and for appropriating the moneys granted in this session of parliament." (The act itself occupies 47 pages.)

<sup>53</sup> Press mark 8223 c. 9 (77, 78, 79, 85, 86).

<sup>54</sup> *Commons Journals*, vol. xvii, p. 251.

<sup>55</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 126.

Although the facts which I have here gathered are not conclusive proof, it seems to me fairly evident that the following statements may be made with reasonable assurance: (1) The proposal to tax papers and pamphlets was not new in 1712. It had been made many times in pamphlets and had been introduced in parliament at least once and possibly twice before that time. (2) So far as we are able to determine, Swift had no information other than that of well-informed people, that such a measure was being considered. (3) The act was not secretly passed. (4) There was no departure from normal procedure in making the measure part of a general taxing bill. (5) The strongest incentive to enact some restriction on the press came from those who desired to protect the Established Church. It was primarily a religious or ecclesiastical movement rather than political,<sup>56</sup> and the Queen herself was its leading proponent.

As Swift left the Whigs and became a Tory because the Tories were the supporters of the Church of England, it would be safe to assume that he sympathized with the general purpose. He himself says so thirty-five years later.<sup>57</sup> We have, moreover, his own words that he did not approve of the means devised to carry out this purpose. There is to offset this no evidence that he suggested the scheme of taxing papers and pamphlets or urged the adoption of the measure.

JOSEPH M. THOMAS.

<sup>56</sup> The following comment in *The Observer*, vol. XI, numb. 38, from Wed. May 7 to Sat. May 12, 1712, will show the feeling at the time in regard to the measure:

"If your Honours think such an Exemption will be too partial and open, we humbly propose an Expedient, that it may be handsomely couch'd in a General Clause for exempting all that is Writ by High Church Authors, *ad propagandam fidem*, especially if it be done on *French* paper, for we're willing to damn all that's Dutch."

<sup>57</sup> *Vide supra*, No. 17.